

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INTSUM 310 - MAY 5, 1977

1. WEST BANK. THESE WERE LARGE-SCALE RIOTS IN THREE TOWNS YESTERDAY -- NABLUS, JENIN, AND RAMALLAH -- FOLLOWING THE KILLING OF TWO RESIDENTS OF QABATIYA, NORTH OF NABLUS DURING A DISTURBANCE TUESDAY. ISRAELI SECURITY FORCES USED TEAR GAS TO DISPERSE THE RIOTERS, A CURFEW WAS ORDERED IN NABLUS, AND ADDITIONAL ISRAELI TROOPS WERE DISPATCHED TO THE AREA. FURTHER UNREST IS VERY LIKELY.
(LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

2. ISRAEL. THE ISRAELIS ARE AGAIN EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT THE US WILL ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE A SETTLEMENT ON THE MIDDLEEAST. SEVERAL ISRAELI PAPERS INTERPRETED PRESIDENT CARTER'S COMMENTS TO EUROPEAN COMMENTATORS
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AS IMPLYING POSSIBLE SUPPORT OF AN IMPOSED SETTLEMENT. PERES SAID IN AN INDIRECT RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT CARTER THAT AN IMPOSED SOLUTION IS NO SOLUTION AT ALL. SECRETARY VANCE'S STATEMENT YESTERDAY SAYING THAT THE US PLANS TO SUGGEST WAYS TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE IS LIKELY TO INCREASE ISRAELI ANXIETY.

3. ISRAELI UN AMBASSADOR HERZOG NOTED TO OUR UN MISSION THAT THE SOVIET DELEGATION APPEARS TO BE GOING OUT OF ITS WAY TO POINT OUT TO THE ISRAELI MISSION THAT THE USSR HAS BEEN A MODERATING INFLUENCE ON ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES AT THE UN. MOREOVER, A SOVIET OFFICIAL RECENTLY SUGGESTED TO AN ISRAELI MISSION OFFICER THAT ISRAEL SHOULD PUBLICLY ASK FOR RENEWED RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. THE ISRAELI REPLIED THAT THE USSR SHOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE ON THIS, SINCE THEY SEVERED RELATIONS.

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4. PA-ESTINIAN: THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS DECIDED ON THE NEW COMPOSITION OF THE PCC -- THE ORGANIZATIONAL BRIDGE BETWEEN THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL (PNC) AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. THE PCC WILL BE EXPANDED TO 55 MEMBERS FROM ITS PREVIOUS 40, AND WILL INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES IN THE ARAB WORLD. THE PNC AT ITS MARCH SESSION LEFT IT TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO DECIDE UPON THE PCC'S NEW COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP.

5. EMBASSY DAMASCUS REPORTS THAT A REGULAR SOURCE RELATED THAT PNC CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM HAS DISPLAYED RECENTLY UNCHARACTERISTIC PESSIMISM ABOUT CURRENT ARAB PEACE EFFORTS. FAHUM OPINED THAT SADAT MIGHT ATTEMPT TO REACH A PEACE SETTLEMENT ON HIS OWN BUT IS RESTRAINED BY A FEAR OF BEING ISOLATED IN THE ARAB WORLD.

6. FOLLOWING TALKS IN TRIPOLI BETWEEN THE LIBYANS
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AND PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS, A COMMUNIQUE CALLED FOR "PROGRESSIVE FORCES" IN THE ARAB WORLD TO LAUNCH A "COMBINED REVOLUTIONARY ACTION AGAINST IMPERIALIST, ZIONIST AND REACTIONARY FORCES." EMBASSY TRIPOLI COMMENTED THAT THE COMMUNIQUE'S LANGUAGE APPEARS TO SUBSTANTIATE OTHER INDICATIONS THAT LIBYA, ALGERIA, IRAQ, AND THE REJECTIONISTS ARE AGAIN ATTEMPTING TO ORGANIZE A REJECTIONIST FRONT TO OPPOSE MIDEAST PEACE EFFORTS.

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7. SYRIA. BOTH THE SYRIANS AND SOVIETS HAVE CONTINUED TO PROFESS SATISFACTION WITH THE OUTCOME OF PRESIDENT ASAD'S VISIT TO THE USSR LAST MONTH. THE SYRIANS ARE PLEASED WITH ASSURANCES OF ADDITIONAL MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, AND THE SOVIETS VALUED ASAD'S COMMITMENT TO KEEP THEM INVOLVED IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS.

8. NEITHER SIDE APARENTLY SEES THE VISIT AS MORE THAN A

BEGINNING, HOWEVER, INDICATIONS THAT THE SOVIET ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID PACKAGE HAS YET TO BE FINALLY AGREED ON SUGGESTS THAT THE USSR INTENDS TO REMAIN IN A POSITION TO REMIND ASAD, IF NECESSARY, OF HIS NEED FOR THEM. FOR HIS PART, ASAD'S APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS TO BIND SYRIA TO ANY SPECIFIC APPROACH REGARDING THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM SUGGESTS THAT HE REMAINS INTENT ON PRESERVING MAXIMUM ROOM FOR MANEUVER AS MOVES TO REVIVE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE GAIN MOMENTUM.

9. THE SYRIANS EVIDENTLY RECEIVED PARTIAL SATISFACTION OF THEIR REQUESTS FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, ACCORDING TO A SOVIET SOURCE IN DAMASCUS, THE USSR AGREED TO PROVIDE THE EQUIVALENT OF \$65 MILLION TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION OF A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN SYRIA. EARLIER REPORTING INDICATED THAT MOSCOW HAD AGREED TO COMPLETE EXISTING SOVIET

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PROJECTS ON TIME AND TO EXPAND AID IN THE FIELDS OF IRRIGATION, RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION, AND IMPROVEMENT OF PORT FACILITIES AT LATAKIA. ON THE QUESTION OF RESCHEDULING SYRIA'S DEBT TO THE USSR, HOWEVER, AN OFFICIAL IN THE SOVIET MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOLD EMBASSY MOSCOW THAT NO DECISION HAD BEEN REACHED; MOSCOW, HE SAID, HAD AGREED ONLY TO "STUDY" THE PROBLEM.

10. FOR THE SOVIETS, MEANWHILE, THE OUTCOME OF THE VISIT IS APPARENTLY SEEN PRIMARILY IN TERMS OF ITS POTENTIAL FOR THE SOVIET ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THEY ARE PROBABLY CONTENT FOR THE TIME BEING WITH ASAD'S PUBLIC ASSURANCES THAT SYRIA WILL COORDINATE ITS POLICY ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT PROCESS WITH MOSCOW. TANGIBLE GAINS FOR THE SOVIETS, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY MERE FEW, AND MOSCOW REPORTEDLY WAS "SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED" THAT ASAD WAS UNWILLING TO DEFINE MORE PRECISELY HIS NEGOTIATING OPTIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST. (CONFIDENTIAL)

11. ARAB BOYCOTT. THE MEETING OF ARAB BOYCOTT DIRECTORS, SCHEDULED FOR MAY 7 IN ALEXANDRIA, HAS BEEN POSTPONED, ACCORDING TO SOURCES OF EMBASSY CAIRO AND OUR ALEXANDRIA CONSULATE. THE REASON REPORTEDLY IS TO ALLOW FOR A FULL REVIEW OF THE BOYCOTT STRATEGY. THE SOURCES HAVE INDICATED THAT MODERATES ARE PUSHING FOR PROVISIONS TO EASE BOYCOTT RESTRICTIONS WHEN IT IS TO THE ARABS' ADVANTAGE. (CONFIDENTIAL) CHRISTOPHER

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